Health and Social Services

Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter

May 2015 — Volume 14, Issue 1

If your store has not received a new "WIC Accepted Here" sign please contact us immediately. New pink signs were mailed to all stores in March. The "WIC Accepted Here" sign must be posted near the store's entrance(s). Please make sure you are displaying the new sign.

New WIC Approved Foods List

The Approved Foods List / Participant ID booklet has been revised and updated with new products and images. The State WIC Office will mail the new booklets to all stores before June 1. If your store is an "A" store you will receive three booklets, a "B" store will receive 8 booklets, and a "C" store 15 booklets. The food list will also be available online soon at http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/vendors/default.aspx.

Please train all managers and cashiers on the allowed foods and the requirement to use the signatures in the booklet to confirm that the shopper is authorized to use WIC checks.

WIC clinics will begin distributing the new booklets to participants in June 2015. It will take at least three months for all participants to have the new booklets. Since items that have been removed from the previous booklet may no longer be purchased with WIC checks, it will be important for cashiers to confirm the eligibility of food items at every transaction. We will provide a "Changes at a Glance" bulletin to stores to help clarify which food items have been added, deleted, or changed. As always, please contact the Vendor Management Unit if you have any questions.

Vendor Reauthorizations this Fall

All current vendor agreements will expire on September 30, 2015. Every vendor must reapply for authorization for the period October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2018. Application packets will be distributed in July. To ensure continuity of authorization, your application must be received in the State WIC office by August 31, 2015. Extensions of the current vendor agreement are not allowed under federal regulations. If you have questions please contact your WIC Vendor Management Unit at (907) 465-3100.

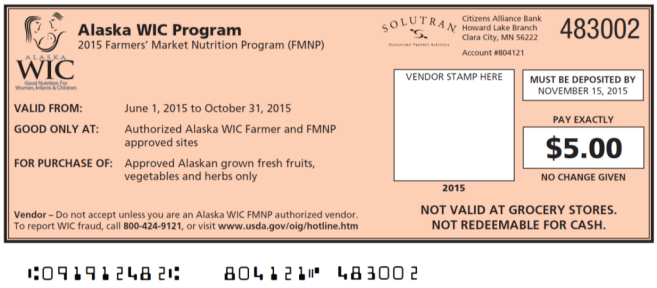
Changing Prices of WIC Foods – What's Allowed?

WIC Program regulations require each State agency to help contain program costs by selecting vendors with competitive prices, and to monitor vendor prices to ensure that program funds are able to benefit as many eligible women, infants and children as possible. Each vendor's prices for WIC food items must pass the competitive price criterion set by the State WIC agency – at the time of initial authorization and throughout the period of the vendor agreement.

The Alaska WIC Program conducts a vendor price survey three times each year. The shelf prices that you report on your surveys determine the maximum allowable reimbursement for WIC food items. As part of routine vendor monitoring, we compare your onsite shelf prices to your most recent price survey. Your prices for WIC foods should not change between price surveys. If you increase your prices, you risk being reimbursed at a lower amount for any check affected by the price change.

Do Not Accept Farmers' Market Coupons

Any Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons submitted for reimbursement by WIC stores will be rejected. Only authorized farmers are allowed to accept these coupons. Here is an example of what the FMNP coupon looks like so your cashiers know what not to accept.



Alaska Check Rejections for February—April 2015

These check rejection types have continued to be our most common errors. We encourage you and your staff to review proper WIC check processing. Please contact us if you'd like assistance with training as we are always willing to help.

239 were rejected for Missing Participant Signature — This is a required step that should never be missed. Checks submitted for reimbursement without a participant signature will be rejected by the bank. Under federal regulations, the state may not reimburse a vendor if the participant's signature is missing from the check.

107 were rejected for Missing Vendor Number — Before submitting any check for reimbursement you must add your vendor stamp. Handwritten vendor numbers will be rejected. By not correctly adding your vendor number your store may incur banking fees for returned checks which the State of Alaska WIC program cannot reimburse.

IMPORTANT Food News!

Enfamil ProSobee Infant Formula Label Change

Used to look like this:

Now looks like this:

WIC Food Notes

Yogurt Beginning June 1, 2015, all WIC authorized stores must maintain a minimum stock of 32 oz. plain low-fat or nonfat yogurt. Minimum stocking requirements are designed to ensure all stores have an amount sufficient for the number of WIC customers who shop at the store, and the community. The minimum stock must be maintained at all times.

Potatoes Beginning June 1, 2015, all types of potatoes may be purchased with WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs). Potatoes (including white, Yukon gold, russet, fingerling, baking, sweet, yams and any other variety) may be purchased as fresh, frozen, or canned. Frozen or canned potatoes may not have any of the following added or combined: fats, oils, sugars, meat. Specific brands/varieties of approved frozen potatoes will be identified soon.

Rice Chex There has been some confusion about Rice Chex, which have a new "gluten-free" label. Rice Chex has always been gluten free, and they are an approved WIC food item.

Milk Type Matters!

WIC participants must buy the type of milk listed on their checks. For instance, if a check specifies 1% or Fat-free, the participant may not purchase 2% or whole milk. Many more participants are prescribed 1% or Fat-free than milks with a higher fat content, and stores should order and stock sufficient 1% and Fat-free in fresh, evaporated, and UHT milks. Note: *A store may not offer or allow a substitution of higher fat milk when 1% or Fat-free is listed on the check.*

Alaska WIC Vendor Management Unit

Health and Social Services

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Managers-

Please post this newsletter for your staff to read

NEW HIRE: We are pleased to announce that we've hired John King as our new Assistant Vendor Coordinator. John's primary responsibilities will include routine vendor monitoring, compliance investigations, price surveys, data management, complaints, training, and special projects. John has most recently worked in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations, recruitment and training of staff, and customer and vendor relations for Holland America-Princess-Alaska-Yukon. John has a bachelor's degree in Physical Geography, with a minor in Geographical Information Systems, and has also worked in clean water and community involvement projects. During his student years, John worked for a large grocery retailer and is familiar with WIC from the perspective of grocery ordering/stocking and transactions at the cash register.

No Rain Checks Allowed

Contacting the WIC Vendor Unit

The Vendor Unit will provide assistance to vendors at any time. For questions or complaints, please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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IF YOU FIND LOST CHECKS: Please notify your local WIC agency or the State Office immediately at (907) 465-3100 so the checks can be returned to the participant.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested on the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 200250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.